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24 January 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR: Directorate History Officers

SUBJECT: Intelligence Museum

1. The Director recently approved the abolition of the Intelligence Museum Commission and transferred responsibility for this program to the History Staff.

2. In addition to the documented history of the Agency - in official papers, recorded memories, and finished histories - there are other paraphenalia which may prove suitable for inclusion in an intelligence museum. The first task is to identify these items, and we have very little to go on. This is why I seek your counsel.

3. First, I would like to know from you what collections exist already with a general description of the contents and location.

4. Second, would you seek whatever advice you see fit in establishing some guidelines as to what we shall be looking for. In this connection, the recent Cuban missile crisis exhibit may provide some clues. Certain items would appear to qualify as museum items:

(1) Unique documents, such as, letters from the President, critical Agency cables, assessments, reports, or estimates.

(2) Unique equipment, such as, the U-2, the U-2 camera.

(3) Unique products, such as, the first photograph identifying IRBMs, [redacted] the low-level photography.

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(4) Photographs, such as, the briefing at the UN, meeting of the NSC Executive Committee.

5. Obviously, the criteria will vary from activity to activity, and from directorate to directorate. In some cases, we shall be looking mostly for historic papers; in others, for special equipment; in many cases, photographs of places and persons may be the best we can do.

6. There is no intention of assembling everything in one great exhibit hall. Ultimately, there may be some thought to special displays - classified or unclassified - but this is not uppermost in my mind. At this point, I am mainly concerned in what I suppose is best termed a feasibility study.

7. After I receive your comments, it may be desirable to have a meeting. If that happens, I promise it will be the first of very few.

WALTER ELDER
Chief, CIA History Staff